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Like Olive Plants

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Two Poems

Like Olive Plants

Like olive plants, the Psalmist says my children are:
Banked round about the table in a ring.
And I in whose untropical asphalt no such green things grow
Am puzzled. I think of them as roaring lions seeking to devour.
They share, I guess, some qualities with trees: they're strong,
They willow with the wind, they sob in spring—
Perhaps for different reasons—
(I have never had a tree come running to me desolate),
They're thick of skin, impervious to rain,
They sink their feet delightfully in mud and seem to thrive
And only God can know how far their subtle roots stretch underground.
But I cannot see in them the comeliness of trees:
The sweet leanover, leaf-dripping loveliness, the sanguine shade;
I see the stalk only, bitter with growth,
And am harassed by husbandry.

The Psalmist has, however, bigger eyes
And visions harvest and transfiguration:
Blossom and flower and fruit—
Fruit of the womb bearing fruit of its own in time
And going gathered and resplendent to the market.